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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/C AND DRL

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [RW](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: HOTEL RWANDA MANAGER NO HERO TO GOR

Classified By: Poloff GLearned. Reason 1.4(b)

¶11. (C) Summary. There has been an ongoing public campaign to discredit Paul Rusesabagina, the former manager of Hotel des Mille Collines during the 1994 genocide and current hero in the US and Europe due to the film 'Hotel Rwanda', in Rwanda. The efforts to damage the reputation of Mr. Rusesabagina have been spearheaded by 'The New Times', a pro-government, English language paper but also include the President, senators and other genocide survivors claiming to have been at the Mille Collines during the genocide. Ambassador confirmed with National Security Service Director that this is a GOR-driven effort which will continue. Belgian Embassy had no information on a 2005 car accident that Mr. Rusesabagina has claimed was an attempt on his life by the GOR. End summary.

¶12. (U) The New Times has published a series of highly critical articles and editorials that have called into question Mr. Rusesabagina's actions during the spring and summer of 1994. Additionally, The New Times has a web page called 'Facts about Paul Rusesabagina'. Accusations include:
-- Using his fame from 'Hotel Rwanda' to advance an agenda of divisionism and to undermine efforts to improve tolerance and reconciliation among Rwandans.
-- Deliberately distorting history in order to negate the genocide of the Tutsis and protect those who carried it out.
-- Lying about his heroic actions during the genocide.

¶13. (U) Articles have included quotes from genocide survivors, including Senators Odette Nyiramirimo and Wellers Gasamagera (Note: Sen. Nyiramiriro, whose story is featured in the book 'We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow You Will be Killed With Your Children', is reportedly a former friend of Mr. Rusesabagina but is now accusing him of charging her over \$400 for her time in the hotel. End note). Others have accused him of: forcing those who could not pay out of hotel rooms, associating closely with Interahamwe and Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) leadership, and cutting off all of the phone lines in the hotel except the one in his office (which he then charged people to use).

Rwanda's Heroes are Not Made in America

¶14. (U) In a public speech in Kigali on February 1, National Heroes Day, President Kagame singled out Rusesabagina out as a 'manufactured hero' who, 'sooner or later, ...will let his manufacturers down'. Kagame said that 'Rwanda's Heroes are not made in America, Europe or Asia' and 'Rwanda's history must be determined by Rwandans not foreigners'. A New Times article described the President as 'seemingly irritated' when referring to Rusesabagina during the speech.

¶15. (C) The day after Kagame's speech, Ambassador Arietti met

with National Security Service Director Ndahiro. Ndahiro said that the GOR had conducted an investigation into the events that occurred at the Hotel des Mille Collines during the genocide and determined that much of the story depicted in the movie was inaccurate. According to the GOR,s investigation, Rusesabagina exploited his position to enrich himself at the expense of the Tutsis who were forced to pay him for protection. He dismissed Rusesabagina,s role in preventing attacks on the hotel claiming that the presence of the UN forces was the real deterrent.

¶ 16. (C) Ndahiro told Ambassador Arietti that the GOR is under pressure from genocide survivors who resent the focus on Rusesabagina who they feel is enriching himself due to the publicity surrounding Hotel Rwanda, while genocide survivors continue to face multiple problems which Rusesabagina ignores. Moreover, the GOR believes he has become a proponent of the theory of a double genocide, which equates the killing of up to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus with the killings of perhaps tens of thousands of Hutus by the Rwandan Patriotic Army during and after its military campaign to overthrow the previous genocidal government. Ndahiro said President Kagame may well use the April 2006 genocide commemoration ceremonies to further criticize Rusesabagina. According to Ndahiro, the GOR recognizes that Rusesabagina is thought of as a hero in the US and has no intention of criticizing the producers of the film or the USG for its actions. (Note. President Bush awarded Rusesabagina the Presidential Medal of Freedom. End note).

¶ 17. (C) In a 7 March meeting with counterpart at the Belgian Embassy, poloff requested information on a car wreck in Belgium on 9 May 2005 that Rusesabagina claims was an attempt on his life by the GOR. Belgian poloff, Sibile Decartier, had no knowledge of said incident but said she would follow up with the Belgian security service. Additionally, Decartier was unaware of any overtly anti-GOR comments made by Rusesabagina or intentions to form an independent political party.

¶ 18. (C) Comment. It is not clear what impact the GOR,s anti-Rusesabagina campaign will have outside of Rwanda, but inside the country, it is certainly an issue that President Kagame considers important enough to risk some bad press. GOR contacts, including Ndahiro, have alluded to the still unconfirmed political intentions of Rusesabagina. While this may be one of the reasons for this campaign, what is certain is that there are members of the GOR that dismiss Rusesabagina,s status as a hero and do not appreciate his popularity in the U.S. and Europe. As expressed by Ndahiro, the GOR has thought through the arguments and considers it necessary to debunk the 'self-proclaimed hero'. Thus, despite the possibility of negative attention, the GOR seems set to continue these personal attacks. Post will continue to follow and update, including any development on the 2005 car accident. End comment.

ARIETTI